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GOVERNMENT NOTICE
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT VAN ONDERWYS

No. 595   7 May 1999

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT NO. 27 OF 1996)

**PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE
ON THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE SENIOR CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION**

In view of the poor examination results in the 1997 Senior Certificate Examination
severe criticism was received from several sectors of the South African community.

In response to these criticisms I instituted several initiatives to address the problems.
One such initiative was the appointment of the Ministerial Committee on the Senior
Certificate Examination.

The terms of reference of the Committee was to address the following aspects related to the Senior Certificate Examination:

. **Quality** assurance of Senior Certificate assessment in terms of the *South African Certification Council Act, 1986 (Act No. 85 of 1986);*

* the capacity of the provincial departments of education to **analyse** and use the Senior Certificate results; and

* the examination and computer system currently used by the Provincial Examining Bodies with a view to determining the suitability, efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Now, therefore, I **Sibusiso Mandlenkosi** Emmanuel **Bengu,** Minister of **Education,** hereby in terms of *Section 3(4)(l) of the National&cation Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996),* request any **person,** society or organisation to submit to me, before **Friday 28 May 1999,** comments on the **afore-mentioned draft** document.

Comments **should** be forwarded to:

> The **Director-General:** Education
> (**For** the attention of **Mr R R Polish**)
> Private Bag X895
> **PRETORIA**

WET OP NASIONALE ONDERWYSBELEID, 1996 (WET NO. 27 VAN 1996)

PUBLISERING VAN DIE MINISTERIËLE KOMITEE SE VERSLAG MET BETREKKING TOT DIE ONDEROEK VAN DIE SENIOR SERTIFIKAATEKSAMEN VIR OPENBARE INLIGTING

Die skool eksamenuitslae van die 1997 Senior Sertifikaateksamen het gelei tot 'n algemene ontevredenheid in verskeie sektore van die Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap. Die kwaliteit van die skool- en eksamenproses is bevraagteken.

As gevolg van hierdie kritiek, het ek verskeie inisiatiewe geloods om hierdie probleem aan te spreek. Een so 'n inisiatief was die installing van die Ministeriële Komitee vir die Senior Sertifikaateksamen.

Die opdrag van die Komitee was om die volgende aspekte met betrekking tot die Senior Sertifikaateksamen aan te spreek:

- Kwaliteitsversekering van die Senior Sertifikaatassesering in terme van die *Wet op die Suid-Afrikaanse Sertifiseringsraad, 1986 (Wet No. 85 van 1986);*
- die vermoë van die provinsiale onderwysdepatemente om die Senior Sertifikaatuitslae te analiseer en aan te wend; en
- die eksamen- en rekenaarstelsel wat tans deur die provinsiale eksamineringsliggame gebruik word, met die doel om die gepastheid, doeltreffendheid en bruikbaarheid daarvan te bepaal.

Daarom versoek ek, Sibusiso Mandlenkosi Emmanuel Bengu, Minister van Onderwys, hiermee ingevolge *Artikel 3(4)(l)* van *die Wet op Nasionale Onderwysbeleid, 1996 (Wet No. 27 van 1996)*, enige persoon, vereniging of organisasie om aan my voor Vrydag 28 Mei 1999, kommentaar op die voorgenoemde dokument voor te lê.

Kommentaar meet gestuur word aan:

Die Direkteur-Generaal: Onderwys

(Vir aandag: Mnr R R Polish)

Privaatsak X895

PRETORIA

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S. M. E. BENGU

MINISTER VAN ONDERWYS

REPORT

INVESTIGATION INTO THE

SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

BY THE

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

PRETORIA   **SEPTEMBER 1998**

THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION
PROF S.M.E. BENGU

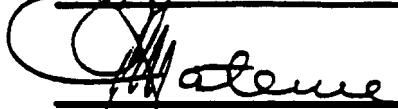The committee has pleasure in submitting its report on the Senior Certificate Examination

Dr Morgan Naidoo (Chairperson)

Mr Louis Farrell (Member)

Dr Mabu Mateme (Member)

Ms Meg Pahad (Member)
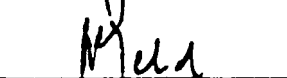
Prof Francois Steffens (Member)
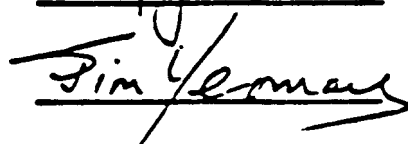
Mr John Tyers (Member)

Ms Nan Yeld (Member)

Mr Jim Yeomans (Member)

1 September 1998   Pretoria

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Members of the committee express appreciation for their appointment to seine on the Ministerial Committee on the Senior Certificate Examinations. It is hoped that the results of the investigation will go a long way in contributing towards quality performance for both educators and learners.

Special thanks go to Heads of the Provincial Departments of Education, who made our visits to their departments very smooth. Not only did their heads of examinations and those of other sections welcome us with open arms, but they also assisted in bringing together identified units and stakeholders, who gave very generously of their time to have in depth discussions with Committee members. Our thanks **also go** to the following for their time:

Bureau Nucleus

Cape Technikon

COSATU

Department of Labour

Edusource

Independent Examination Board

Information Technology Industry Training Board

National Professional Teachers Organisation of SA

National Youth Commission

Q-Data Consulting (Pty) Ltd

SPL (Pty) Ltd

Sertec

South African Qualifications Authority

University of the Western Cape

Business South Africa

Centre for Trade Testing

Department of Education

East London Technical College

Human Sciences Research Council

Information Technology Association of SA

National Access Consortium

National Training Board

Pentech

Registrar for Higher Education

SAFCERT

South African Democratic Teachers Union

Technical College Lecturer's Association

They unreservedly gave advice, opinions and suggestions that we found invaluable.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the senior officials and their support staff at the national Department of Education.

CONTENTS

SECTION ONE   Page

SECTION TWO

2.1　　The Senior Certificate

2.2　　Quality Assurance of the Senior Certificate Examination

SECTION ONE

1.1 Preface

Examinations - and more **particularly** examination **results** - are of concern to many different groups, and as such they demand careful scrutiny. For pupils, they can generate a feeling of achievement and a means by which career aspirations are **likely** to be satisfied. For parents, they reflect the successor otherwise of their and their children's efforts. For teachers, examinations are a means by which to measure their effectiveness as professionals.   For the community, examinations are of profound importance as the **results** have the psychological effect of indicating the competency, achievement and worth of any nation. This is **particularly** so in the South African context, where years of ethnic provision of education and deprivation have **distorted** examination performance.   **Although** the notion exists that examinations reflect **mainly** on **cognitive** achievement, **it** is essential that we note that they also provide important information on sociological, psychological and emotional aspects of a society, Good examination performance can have a positive effect on the self-image of a nation - likewise, poor performance can have a demoralizing and destabilizing effect.

For the system planners and administrators, examination performance can serve as an important guide to the educational **health** of a nation. It can be used as a warning when things go wrong as well as an indication of the success or failure of curriculum reforms. A further and very powerful use of examinations, however, is their **washback** effect on schooling – indeed, the 'assessment-led reform' **school** of thought holds that the prominent place occupied by high-stakes examinations can be used extremely effectively to drive educational reforms. Thus, educationally sound changes in the examination process and papers are **likely** to promote improved teaching and learning practices in the preparation for the examinations - conversely, of course, poor or **out-of-date** assessment practices will derail or severely constrain curriculum innovations,

The Senior **Certificate** examination, in its present form, plays a critical role in the current education system. It is the culmination of **twelve** years of schooling and seines as the entrance into Higher Education. In view of this it has become the critical concern of everybody in this country.

In terms of the Constitution of South Africa, the Minister of Education is responsible for norms and standards in **education,** and the provincial authorities are responsible for the actual provision of education. The provincial authorities are also responsible for matters related to the running of institutions in the General and Further Education bands and conducting examinations is therefore a provincial responsibility. The national Department of Education is not directly involved in the administration of examinations, It does, however, have a monitoring function to ensure that national standards are maintained.

The National Education Policy Act (Act No. 27 of 1996), states that "the Minister shall direct that the standards of education provision, delivery and performance throughout the Republic be monitored and evaluated by the Department annually or at other specified intervals, with the object of assessing progress in complying with the provision of the Constitution and with national education policy". The monitoring of examinations, however, must be carried out in terms of the South African Certification Council Act (Act No. 85 of 1986), which "ensure(s) that the certificates issued by the Council at a point of withdrawal represent the same standard of education and examination".

The first non-ethnic provincial Senior Certificate examination was written in 1996. The number of candidates who wrote the examination was 518 032. Of these, **278 958** candidates passed the examination, the national pass rate being 53,9%. In the 1997 Senior Certificate examination, the number of candidates who wrote the examination was 559 233. In comparison with 1996, there was an overall increase in the performance of candidates of 7,9% (41 201 candidates). The 1997 examination results, however, show a significant decline in the performance of candidates. The pass rate was **47,4%,** a decrease of 6,5% when compared with the 1996 results. In total, 14692 fewer candidates passed the examination. This prompted a national outcry from several sectors of the South African community. The nation began to question the quality of schooling and the examination process.

The Minister of Education, in reaction to the criticism received about the quality of teaching and learning in schools, instituted several initiatives to address the problems. One such initiative was the appointment of the Ministerial Committee on the Senior Certificate examination.

1.2 Glossary

ASECA	A Secondary Curriculum for Adults
CAL?	Cognitive Advanced Language Proficiency
Department of Education	National Department of Education
EMIS	Educational'Management Information Systems
ESATI	Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurers
Ex-DET	Ex Department of Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FETQA	Further Education and Training Quality Assurers
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HG	Higher Grade
IEB	Independent Examination Board
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
IPEC	Interprovincial Examinations Committee
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Information Technology Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LSEU	Learning Site Effectiveness Unit
MEC	Minister of Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSA	National Schools Authority
NSB	National Standards Body
OBET	Outcomes-based Education and Training
QA	Quality Assurance
Q Data	Q Data Consulting
SAFCERT	South African Certification Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA	South African University Vice-Chancellors Association
SC	Senior Certificate
SERTEC	Certification Authority of Technical Colleges
SETA	Sectoral Education Training Authority
SG	Standard Grade
SYSTEM	Project Examinations

1.3 Terms of Reference of the Committee

The terms of reference of the committee were as gazetted by the Minister of Education on 25 February 1998 (Government Gazette No. 18708 Vol. 392). They are reproduced as Appendix A.

During its first sitting the Committee discussed the terms of reference. The Committee divided itself into three sub-committees to look into the following focus areas: Quality Assurance of the Senior Certificate examination; the capacity of the provincial education departments to analyse and use the Senior Certificate results to enhance teaching and learning; and the Information Technology systems used for the Senior Certificate examination.

The expanded terms of reference were approved as follows:

1.3.1 Quality Assurance of Senior Certificate Assessment

The SA Certification Act (1 986), as amended, will be analysed, with a view to:

- Establishing what, if any, short -term improvements might come into place during 1998;
- Advising on any transitional arrangements that could be made usefully;
- Recommending any longer term re-design of FETC level assessment practices to meet the requirements of current OBET-based policy reforms; and
- Determining the capacity of provinces in respect of the standardisation process.

The following issues will form part of the investigation in respect of the above:

. Forms of moderation across examining bodies;

.The role of the SAFCERT Council;

- Moderation strategies, including: external moderation; statistical adjustment; external instruments; QA criteria; and QA process evaluation;
- The use of national standards and integrative assessments to transform qualifications;
- SAFCERT in relation to other bodies, including SAQA, the Matriculation Board, the Department of Education, NSA, etc.; and
- The role of the Department of Education in relation to all examining bodies, including non-provincial bodies.

1.3.2 The Capacity of the Provincial Education Departments to Analyse and Use the Senior Certificate Results

The following will be undertaken:

- An assessment of the extent to which the provincial education departments have the capacity to undertake the kinds of analysis (in respect of Grade 12 examinations, including technical examinations at that level) which would enable them to -

♦ arrive at appropriate conclusions about the state of teaching and learning in the provinces;

♦ report effectively on the problems responsible for poor performance in the examination; and

♦ put in place appropriate measures to improve learner and learning site performance.

- The development of recommendations about the kind and scope of analysis and/or procedures which would most likely yield the information listed above, and the way in which such an analysis could best be conducted (including who should most appropriately conduct it). It is envisaged that these recommendations would include procedures for the effective dissemination of these findings, and for the best way in which they could be acted upon to improve learner and learner site performance.

1.3.3   **The Examination Computer System**

The following will be undertaken:

- An analysis of the examination system currently used by the Provincial Examining Bodies, to determine the suitability, efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

- An investigation whether all programme changes to the system (i.e. pass and endorsement requirements as stipulated in Report 550), have been effected accurately and timeously.

- An assessment of the level of understanding of the computer system by personnel currently working within the system.

- A review of the technical capacity of the provinces to capture, process and report on examination data accurately and timeously.

- An evaluation of the nature, quality and financial implications of the service offered by Q Data Consulting Services in terms of maintaining the computer system.

- An evaluation of the nature, quality and financial implications of the system utilised by the Western Cape Education Department prior to Q Data Consulting Services.

- An investigation of the current and future role of the Help Desk services currently offered by the Q Data Help Desk.

- An assessment of the progress made by the provincial departments in securing a new contract for either the development of a new computer system or the maintenance of the existing system.

- An investigation (in the case of provinces which have decided to develop a new system) of the feasibility of maintaining a parallel run so as to ensure the successful implementation of a new system.

- An investigation, in conjunction with the Gauteng Department of Education, of the future location of the Historical Data and the Help Desk Services.

1.4 Nature of the Investigation

The investigation had to be conducted within a period of 30 days and within a limited budget. This required the committee to develop strategies to collect, analyse and interpret salient data within these limits.

The committee divided itself into three sub-committees, *viz.*:

Sub-committee 1	The quality assurance of Senior Certificate assessment
Sub-committee 2	The use of Senior Certificate information to improve teaching and learning
Sub-committee 3	The Information Technology systems used for the Senior Certificate

Sub-committee 1 undertook a study of the relevant policy legislation, a literature survey of quality assurance, a study of policy directives presented by the Department of Education and interviews with key role players and stakeholders.

Sub-committee 2 visited the education departments of all nine provinces, with a view to determining the status of examinations and the type of information that was submitted to schools, as well as to test various ideas and options. Discussions were held with various role players such as teacher organisations, subject advisors, examination personnel and curriculum specialists. In addition, examiners' reports were gathered and studied in order to assess the role they played, or could play, in improving teaching and learning.

Sub-committee 3 interviewed key personnel involved with Information Technology. The committee visited all the provinces to determine provincial capacity in respect of the 1998 Senior Certificate examinations.

The full committee discussed the findings of the sub-committees with a view to presenting a holistic and co-ordinated report.

1.5 Limitations

This comprehensive Ministerial Committee Report covers all of the areas as originally gazetted and as per the revised terms of reference that were agreed upon. There are, however, a number of factors that should be taken into account which prevent the report from being as complete as the Ministerial Committee would have liked. These are as follows:

. The time frame given to the project was too short to allow an in-depth investigation of all the issues. Wide consultation was not possible and most contacts were at the first level.

. There was not enough time to test the responses given.

. The lack of availability of many reports and statistics from the provinces made it difficult to form a comprehensive picture of conditions in the provinces.

. Lack of the availability of syllabi, both within the provinces and the Departmental Head Office, was a limiting factor.

. The committee is concerned about the lack of resources, both financial and skills, within both the provinces and the national Department, in order to implement its recommendations. Many of the recommendations take cognizance of this fact, rather than simply making recommendations that could be implemented under ideal circumstances.

• There was no time to study the impact of the South African Qualifications Authority and the National Qualifications Framework on General and Further Education within the school system.

• The committee was only able to look at the IT aspects of the Senior Certificate examinations' Help Desk and associated functions, and the History Section. Because of time-constraints, the committee was unable to review the Formal Technical Colleges and Teacher Examination sections of the Examination Systems as covered by National Tender RTS 1021SA. This tender for the maintenance of all four sections was awarded to Q Data and terminates in September 1999. All four sections are interdependent.

Despite these limitations, the committee believes that its findings and recommendations could make a major contribution to the improvement of the quality of education in the country.

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11.6 Executive Summary

Background

Examination results as a barometer of learner performance in any nation are of great importance, impacting even on their self-image. In this era of "assessment-led reform" it is recognised that high-stake examinations have a powerful effect on teaching and learning in the classroom. Recent poor performance in the first non-ethnic provincial Senior Certificate examinations has caused the nation to question the quality of schooling and the examination processes, and led to the appointment of this committee.

Terms of Reference

The Committee was requested to investigate three aspects of the examination process. Firstly, the quality assurance of the assessment was examined. Secondly, the use of Senior Certificate information by provinces in the process of improving teaching and learning was investigated. Finally, the Information Technology systems used for the Senior Certificate were considered.

Findings

The Committee found that whilst SAFCERT was doing a reasonable job in terms of the statistical adjustment, its work falls short of good quality assurance. Its approach to the moderation of papers is in itself poor, but the fact that this is where the "quality assurance" ends is most worrying. Consequently it is recommended that SAFCERT be absorbed into a Further Education and Training Quality Assurers (FETQA) to be constituted to perform the full quality assurance function as contained in the SAQA regulations. This FETQA should work with the envisaged Learning Site Effectiveness Units (LSEU) to ensure a "hands-on" approach to quality management at classroom and school as well as systems levels.

It is further suggested that attention be given to all aspects that affect learning and teaching in the classroom negatively, but that a single cost-effective assessment remains the best measurement at the end of Grade 12. The Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) must be designed to perform this function, whilst a properly moderated General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) would measure the exit from free and compulsory schooling at the end of Grade 9.

The Committee also found serious constraints regarding provinces' use of information gained from previous Senior Certificate examinations to improve learning and teaching. The examinations and curriculum sections in provinces should move much closer to enhance and promote the formative value of the Senior Certificate, Closer attention needs to be paid to the selection and training of examiners and moderators and the subsequent use of examination reports to improve what happens in practice needs to be strengthened. In addition, the post structures in the examination sections of provinces need further investigation.

The examination of all first languages needs to be brought in line, with a much greater emphasis on the use of African languages as a tool for cognitive growth. Most significantly, capacity should be built around the use of language teaching (particularly of first languages) for general academic and lifeskills development.

There was broad consensus amongst provinces that Q Data was performing a valuable function and assisting the provinces to run their examinations effectively. Consequently the Committee recommends that there be no new tender until Curriculum 2005 has been fully implemented. Q Data should be allowed to continue their role beyond the September 1999 deadline and should be encouraged to invest in updated operation manuals.

To improve the service further it was suggested that better use be made of the Help Desk for co-ordination and that all provinces migrate back to the Centralised Source Code. Finally it was recognised that the perception that Q Data is expensive was largely brought about because the provinces misuse Q Data consultants for lower level system administration work that should be performed by provincial staff.

Conclusion

There are a number of recommendations in this Committee's report which can be implemented in the short term, To improve the examinations in the longer term, however, the majority of the recommendations need to be implemented. Transforming our human capital involvement in all aspects of the learning and teaching continuum is the only sustainable answer to the problems facing our Grade 12 exit assessment right now and will be the only answer until Outcomes-based Education and Training (OBET) has changed the fundamental nature of the Senior Certificate,

SECTION TWO

2.1 The Senior Certificate

2.1.1 Problems related to the current role of the Senior Certificate

Candidates perceive the Senior Certificate primarily as an access examination focused on university entrance. This can be demonstrated by the subject choice package of the great majority of candidates who offer a package that meets the requirements for a matriculation endorsement. The **Senior Certificate** has often been criticised for attempting to fulfil three disparate purposes, and failing to achieve any of them, viz.:

- It does not provide an appropriate school-leaving certificate for the majority of SA school students.
- It is not a particularly effective predictor of success at university, except in the higher aggregate ranges.
- It is not perceived by employers as a particularly good indicator of work-related competence.

In addition, there is an unacceptably high failure rate among Senior Certificate candidates. The differences between the Higher and Standard Grades do not seem to be consistent between subjects and the examinations in the various languages, particularly first languages, target very different language skills.

In this section we look at some of the ways in which the current Senior Certificate can be strengthened in the short term, to ensure that it does represent a significant and meaningful achievement, measured against nationally consistent standards. We also explore priorities in terms of a gradual introduction of the new Further Education and Training Certificates (FETC) in parallel with the current Senior Certificate, so that we can be sure that the new qualifications are established and accepted by all relevant stakeholders before the Senior Certificate is phased out. This whole process will involve piloting and should begin as soon as possible.

2.1.2 Improving the relevance of the Senior Certificate using the critical outcomes

One way of beginning to re-establish the credibility of the Senior Certificate examination would be to change the focus gradually so that more relevant and appropriate knowledge, skills and concepts are assessed. The critical outcomes, which underpin lifelong learning and form the basis for developing specific outcomes, are:

Critical cross-field outcomes that should underpin all qualifications:

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, or community.
- Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.

- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentations.

- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.

. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Additional outcomes which should inform the development of all learning programmed:

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.

. Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.

- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.

- Explore education and career opportunities.

- Develop entrepreneurial skills.

There seems to be a growing consensus that it is possible to define the critical outcomes embedded in current syllabi and to use these to shift the emphasis of education and training to more relevant and useful outcomes in the interim. This means that entirely new syllabi are not necessary in order to begin this shift. Supplementary learning materials designed to show teachers and students how to use existing textbooks and which may form a basis for a more critical and creative cognitive approach, could also be provided in the interim. As the following comment from an examiner (of Biology Higher Grade) reveals, there is a serious need for assistance and direction in this regard, as well as an immediate shift in this direction:

> *"The way of mixing questions from different chapters is of disadvantage to candidates. Questions should be set according to chapter . . . this will enable candidates to target specific questions that they can score most on, rather than confusing them. "*

This kind of comment points to an alarming reliance on the worst kind of rote learning. This must be addressed as soon as possible without waiting for new syllabi.   Inasmuch as the Senior Certificate examination becomes increasingly focused on those outcomes which have been identified as the key to the modernisation of our curriculum (the critical cross-field outcomes), its results should be able to serve two important purposes, namely:

- To acknowledge the level of achievement reached by each student (in a criterion referenced manner); and

- To provide a basis for selection into Higher Education (HE) institutions.

The committee believes that teaching, learning and assessment throughout all grades should focus on the critical outcomes. In this context a national in-service training (INSET) for teachers campaign is needed. Such a campaign should target the teaching and assessment of the critical outcomes. As this might take time to accomplish, however, it is further recommended that in the short term:

- examiners should receive training in the identification and assessment of critical outcomes;

- these should be included in the setting of examination papers; and

. the examiners' reports should contain feedback on learners' achievements in terms of these critical outcomes.

2.1.3 Improving overall achievement levels in the Senior Certificate by improving language teaching

A specific recommendation in relation to improving all-round competence which might be acted upon immediately has arisen from HE institutions and from examiners' reports. This issue is discussed in more detail in paragraph 2.4.6.2 below. In brief, however, there is evidence that a large proportion of our schools do not give students enough practice in reading - that is to say, in developing critical, selective, analytical and interpretative reading skills - and writing - in developing critical, creative, interpretative, reflective, analytical and transactional writing skills. This lack of opportunity for practice appears to be particularly prevalent in the teaching of African Languages. As a result, questions involving these skills (in all subjects) often account for a large proportion of Senior Certificate failures.

It is suggested that language teaching in general be made an area for immediate *emergency* INSET intervention, particularly in the area of systematic written work in view of its importance across the whole curriculum. As this is likely to be extremely costly, both in terms of available expertise and financial resources, it is further suggested that in the short term, attention be paid to the ways in which they are examined, in an attempt to bring about speedy improvements. This point is taken further in paragraph 2.4.6.2 below.

In addition, as African First Language Senior Certificate examinations tend not to demand critical and analytical skills, learners who take an African language as their first language are disadvantaged, because they have little incentive to develop these critical tools of learning. That is to say, since the examinations tend not to assess these skills, they are likely not to be taught or developed. The assessment of language varies widely in other ways too, with different weighings for orals and other aspects of the examination.

It is recommended that the assessment of all South African languages be standardised as a matter of urgency, so that all languages at First Language level are examined in a comparable way in terms of critical thinking skills and in terms of the internal language components.

2.1.4 Improving the relevance of the Senior Certificate by introducing coherent rules of combination for all Senior Certificate/FETC qualifications

The Senior Certificate is not entirely successful in terms of providing an effective tool for selection into HE institutions. Nor, it seems, do prospective employers find it particularly useful. Most HE institutions are confident that the students who achieve A and B aggregates are likely to do well. But they are not so confident about using subjects and symbols to choose between the students who *score* lower symbols. A

number of HE institutions are introducing additional access tests and entrance examinations, despite the fact that this is a costly and time-consuming process and that they agree that it should not be necessary. In the short term some kind of additional selection process seems to be needed. Before the options are examined, however, the long-term goal needs to be clear.

In June 1997, SAQA outlined the criteria for qualifications registered on the NQF. The first criterion in the list specifies that:

A qualification shall:

Represent a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes and which is intended to provide qualifying factors with applied competence and a basis for further learning;

The committee believes that the gradual introduction of FETC qualifications at Senior Certificate level will create a situation where additional selection tests are *no* longer felt to be necessary. An FET Certificate, which meets the above SAQA criteria, would be extending the relevance of the current Senior Certificate. Piloting such new FETC qualifications should be a matter for urgent action.

Although the endorsement requirements of the Matriculation Board of the CUP provide rules of combination in the current system, they fall short in several ways:

. They are not a particularly reliable indicator of success at university.

•They are designed to create coherent qualifications for access to universities, but not to HE in a broader sense.

•They are not designed to create coherent qualifications for access to careers.

• They do not provide any mechanism for redressing historical inequity.

•They do not provide mechanisms for lateral movement, only for vertical movement.

•They are based on the current list of school and technical college subjects/offerings, which is out-dated and restrictive.

It is the view of the Committee that the current Senior Certificate should be gradually adapted so that all certificates, not only those that have been endorsed for the purpose of university entrance, can meet the SAQA criteria set for qualifications. More specifically, the certificate should meet the rules of combination outlined for FETC Level 4 qualifications registered on the NQF. This would be one way of ensuring that the Senior Certificate has greater coherence.

The current National Training Certificates are severely criticised for consisting of 'applied theory without the context of work experience originally provided by apprenticeships. It is frequently asserted that the level of competence required for the awarding of an N3 certificate is in reality equivalent to an NQF 2, or even an NQF 1. Steps should be taken regarding the N3 examination to ensure that each National Training Certificate qualification consists of a coherent package at the appropriate level on the NQF.

2.1.5 Reviewing the utility of Higher and Standard Grade papers in the Senior Certificate Examination

Many candidates entered for Higher Grade papers perform so poorly that their results couldn't be converted to award a Standard Grade pass. However, it is felt that many such candidates could have passed Standard Grade had they been entered for it from the start. One conclusion drawn from this could be that it is important to retain these two grades and encourage more candidates to enter Standard Grade, thus increasing the pass rate.

This view was repeatedly expressed in examiners' reports as well as in the interviews. However, the Committee feels somewhat ambivalent about it. On the one hand, it is clear that not all learners have the ability to succeed in a subject like Mathematics Higher Grade, and such learners are poorly served by taking it at this level as they are likely to do so badly that they will not gain a pass even on the Standard Grade when the score is converted. On the other hand, it is also clear that many learners who do have the ability to take Mathematics Higher Grade face the danger of being counseled to register for the Standard Grade not for reasons of lack of ability, but for some failure of the system, such as inadequate teacher preparation, lack of support materials, desire for increased pass rates at a school or in a province, or a breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning. In other words, while it is true that entering learners for subjects on the Standard Grade, not Higher Grade, will help to reduce the very high failure rates in Higher Grade subjects, the necessity to do so reflects a failure of the system and not necessarily the inability of learners to succeed on the Higher Grade level given better learning conditions.

Many educators argue that Standard Grade papers tend to demand simple rote learning without understanding or the ability to apply knowledge or transfer skills. They are of the opinion that the current Standard Grade examination perpetuates the iniquities of the Bantu Education system and that all examinations should be set at the same grade (equivalent to the current Higher Grade). However, there is an emphasis in the current Higher Grade examinations on academic theory rather than practical competence and it would be more appropriate if these components were more integrated. In certain subjects, for example Art, it might be important to combine elements of the current Art (Standard Grade) and Art (Higher Grade) to form a single new grade, giving more value to successfully applied artistic talent than is the case in the current Higher Grade examination. The notion of *foundation/, practical and reflective competence* integrating to form *applied competence,* which emerged from the education training and development practices project, is gaining currency.

In certain learning areas and sub-fields it is possible to introduce a choice of subjects/learning areas. For example, if all candidates are required to demonstrate competence in Mathematics, it might be appropriate to introduce two or three kinds of mathematical studies with differing foci. The Committee does not recommend a proliferation of mathematical subjects with a very narrow and specific focus like the currently registered subject *Butcher Mathematics.* It is important to research the real requirements of the relevant stakeholders to determine what kinds of mathematical competence are most in demand. At this stage,

however, the Committee is not in a position to make a recommendation in this regard other than to point to the need for investigation.

The Committee believes that it is essential to combine Higher and Standard Grade subjects, defining the integrated version in the context of a genuine standards-setting process, giving sufficient time and involving all the relevant stakeholders. *Note* that this new, integrated version should not simply be new versions of the old Standard Grade subjects. New learning areas can be piloted and introduced gradually alongside the existing system. In this way the replacements will be tried and tested, and the outdated versions discontinued only when the replacement subjects/learning areas have been proved successful, relevant and appropriate,

2.1.6 Piloting a public examination at the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) level

In the various discussions held in the course of the Committee's investigation, there seemed to be consensus that the introduction of a GETC and a well-managed and quality assured system of internal assessment would go a long way towards solving the problem of school-leaving certification. An effective assessment system would ensure that the achievement of each student was recognised and accredited at the level reached on leaving school. This should be based on internal assessment monitored in three ways:

- by an external moderating instrument, focusing on the critical outcomes;
- by internal quality assurance systems put in place by the provider (usually the national and provincial Departments of Education); and
- by external moderation arranged by the Further Education and Training Quality Assurers (FETQA). The establishment of this body is discussed in paragraph 2.2.1.

Such a system of assessment would be educationally sound, would help to professionalise teachers and would ensure that national standards were met.

The GETC would give the majority a basic qualification on which to build. A general education certificate would need to be followed up by providing alternative learning pathways, so that students could select a route suited to their interests and talents. This would allow students to make more realistic choices and to avoid the current situation of having nothing to aim for other than a Senior Certificate pass - which is one of the causes of the current high failure rate nation-wide.

The Introduction of a GETC (NQF level 1/Grade 9) as an exit-level qualification for compulsory schooling would help to provide a suitable qualification for students who are not necessarily going on to traditional senior secondary schooling, or to HE, at this stage in their lives. At the same time, it would also provide a basis for lifelong learning. It would take the pressure off the Senior Certificate, which would no longer have to serve the purpose of a school-leaving certificate for the majority of people.

The **GETC** could also be used to shift the emphasis from rote learning towards the achievement of the critical outcomes in our education and training system. It should aim to prepare learners for a number of learning pathways, including an improved Senior Certificate and an effective alternative **FETC** system. Improved quality assurance mechanisms piloted in the context of the **GETC** will serve to raise the standard of education and training generally. This will help to ensure that public confidence in both the old and the new qualifications is restored.

It is recommended that a pilot **GETC,** meeting the requirements outlined above, be initiated by the year 2000 at the latest.

2.1.7 A changing perception of 'recovery' and 'second-chance' programmed

The current extremely high failure rate in the Senior Certificate reflects a distorted perception of **SA** learners that access to **opportunity** in our country is limited to those who move directly from school to HE institutions. Thousands of learners continue to attempt the Senior Certificate, in spite of the fact that they are totally unprepared for HE. Many have been shown, through placement testing for 'second-chance' programmed, to be barely at a Grade 7 level of competence.

This misconception also results in a general total unpreparedness for the **labour** market, as vocationally oriented programmed are seen as second best. (In this context *vocationally-oriented programmes* refer to learning programmed which facilitate access to immediate occupation on completion, but does not refer to programmed which are narrowly specific to one job only.)

Given the lack of alternative learning pathways, the state, not surprisingly, hesitates to implement its policy of providing free compulsory general education only up to the age of 15 years. Thus we allow people to overcrowd our schools and use our scarce resources in repeated attempts to pass the Senior Certificate. Annually thousands of candidates still study and write the Senior **Certificate** Examinations at the state's expense even though they are well over 20 years old. Each year large numbers of Senior Certificate candidates should never be allowed to enter for the examination in a responsible education system, as they are certain to fail. It is imperative to provide alternative routes not only into the **workforce,** but also, by building clear lines of articulation, to Higher Education so that the stigma currently attached to vocationally oriented education may disappear.

Even the wealthiest countries in the world select only a minority of students to follow an academic route after the age of 15, providing alternative learning pathways for the majority of students. In many countries some kind of job-related experience is provided even earlier, within the general **(compulsory)** school curriculum, and this is considered to be valuable for all school students. It is a part of education to which students are entitled.

It is clear from the FET White Paper and from the general acceptance of the need for research and development processes, that it is necessary to re-conceptualise and re-structure many of our existing programmed at Senior Certificate/FETC level. Youth and community colleges and 'finishing schools' have been set up. These have attempted to provide young students who have reached Grade 12 (but failed the Senior Certificate) with another opportunity to pass the same examination, or with an alternative at the equivalent level, giving access to the same kinds of HE opportunities as the traditional Senior Certificate. The ASECA and SYSTEM examinations fall broadly into this category.

Experience now indicates that many of the students directed to such courses are unsuitable, They have by no means reached the expected level of achievement of students for the current Grade 12 and should probably not have been entered for the Senior Certificate in the first place. Such programmed can provide a valuable service, but it is recommended that education departments be more selective when they direct students to such courses. If students have little hope of succeeding, the experience will prove a negative one, and valuable resources will have been misdirected.

Initiatives such as the National Access Consortium in the Western Cape, or the Regional Access Programme of the Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (ESATI) offer an alternative approach to the 'second chance' philosophy. It might be worthwhile to investigate both the successes of these programme and their shortcomings, so as to arrive at an alternative model for improving access to HE institutions for students who have failed their Senior Certificate or failed to achieve endorsement.

The Committee recommends that a clear date should be clearly set during 1999 for the implementation of the age of 15 as the end of compulsory and free education.   This implementation should be timed to coincide with, or follow, the introduction of a credible public examination at GETC level. This is not to suggest that learners may not continue their education through the schooling system after this age, but that free education cannot be guaranteed beyond this stage.

It is further recommended that this implementation is monitored and that alternative vocationally oriented qualifications be researched designed and piloted from the year 2000 at the latest.

2.1.8 Piloting new FETC learning programmed and qualifications to supplement the current
Senior Certificate subjects

Neither business nor labour is convinced that the skills and knowledge measured and valued in the current Senior Certificate represent the most desirable selection of outcomes for *use* in the workplace. School and technical college curricula desperately need modernisation. It is important to consider what action may be taken in the short term, before the innovation cycle represented by the introduction of Curriculum 2005 is completed.

The Senior Certificate/FETC should move towards meeting the needs of learners, labour, business and government in the following ways:

● It should serve *to* prepare learners for Higher Education, providing opportunities for short-term and longer-term access via a number of different learning pathways.

● It should provide a link between General Education at school and work, allowing learners to choose occupationally-specific learning pathways, whilst demonstrating clear lines of articulation with HE qualifications which can be taken up at an appropriate stage in their careers.

This requires a complete overhaul of the current array of subjects offered to students in the FET band.

The Department of Education is currently engaged in the enormous task of rationalizing the existing school and technical college subjects. The scope of this project goes beyond the Department of Education and it could well be performed in partnership with Higher Education and research institutions, the Department of Labour and other stakeholders who are interested in seeing the curricula modernised and rationalised.

Several Higher Education institutions and research organisations are already involved in the development of new modules in preparation for an outcomes-based Senior Certificate or FETC. In addition technological, managerial, scientific, creative, cultural and service-oriented studies at Senior Certificate level are being advocated. The Department of Education has an important role to play in the facilitation and co-ordination of this process.

The Committee believes that vocationally oriented subjects could best be revised in negotiation between the Department of Education, the appropriate standard-setting bodies and SETAS. Learnerships are an important element in vocationally oriented learning pathways. These involve extensive workplace experience, in partnership with business and industry. It is important for the Department of Education to work with the Department of Labour and SAQA to ensure that occupational qualifications are full FETC qualifications and not narrowly work-specific.

Such programmed could be conducted in the classroom, college or workplace, but they would all have a workplace component. The move towards partnerships between education and industry characterises the education systems of developed countries throughout the world. In the context of the senior phase in

secondary schools, occupationally oriented learning programmed would provide an alternative to the more academic route and could co-exist with a more traditional Senior Certificate system in selected learning sites. One possible way of introducing such a choice might be to pilot a new approach in selected schools:

- to give all Grade 10 students some indication of the possible occupational application of some of the work they already do in the current interim syllabus (overview of occupational fields);

- to give all Grade 11 students an opportunity to choose (for example) up to three work-related subjects for Senior Certificate (gradually become a little more specialised); and

- to encourage some Grade 12 students to compete for learnerships as the final component of an FETC involving work experience.

In order to raise the status of such alternative programmed, it is suggested that the number of students accepted for such work-related learning pathways in the country as a whole be limited (at least initially) to a number slightly greater than the number of learnership places offered by industry. This would ensure that students compete for places, are rewarded by genuine work experiences, achieve occupational competence and are likely to end up with jobs. In addition, industry would be more likely to cooperage if it were clear that they could select the most suitable candidates who would be likely to succeed in the field.

The Committee therefore recommends that the Department of Education and SAQA should collaborate with selected SETAS to develop, by the year 2000, a number of sectorally oriented learning programmed and qualifications involving key combinations of subjects. These must be piloted, using schools, learnerships and partnerships between education and industry. Tracer studies should be undertaken so that policy makers and planners acquire sufficient data to evaluate the *success* of the programmes. This evaluation will guide the scale of implementation and its time frame. In addition, these pilots could serve to develop and test new partnership relationships between selected schools, technical colleges, businesses and industries. This would help to open up the current Senior Certificate so that it could be more flexible, relevant and responsive to labour market needs.

2.1.9 The impact of learning and teaching on the Senior Certificate Examinations

Numerous interviewees commented on the limited value of the work of this particular Committee, unless extensive investigation of conditions in the classroom took place. Examinations are obviously dependent on the quality of learning and teaching that takes place in the classroom. It is widely acknowledged that South Africa is experiencing a number of problems as a result of the transition from the previous racially segregated systems.   These problems include resource constraints and, most importantly, a generally diminished culture of learning.

A number of factors were cited as reasons for matriculation results as low as 3% on average achieved by certain schools. These include the following:

• Textbooks sometimes reach pupils literally days before an exam is written, or not at all. In the **Setswana** First Language Paper in one Province, for example, the examiner commented that:

> "*I came across many scripts where students claimed that they met books for the first time in the examination room. As a result of this a number of candidates handed in their answer books without anything written on them. Most of the candidates wrote little notes at the end of their answers to say that they did not read the books, they did not understand, they were not taught and that they read books that were not prescribed.* "

In one **particular** province, textbooks were stored at the provincial office, but were never distributed owing to a lack of resources. In others, the collection of textbooks from the previous year is poorly controlled, so that almost none are recovered to be used by the next class. The planning process, however, assumes that these books will be available and so new ones are neither ordered nor budgeted for.

. Another commonly cited problem is the issue of the classroom being declared a no-go area for anyone other than the teacher. This severely limits any type of quality assurance approach, especially where a relatively high percentage of teachers are under-qualified. Clearly, while it makes sense to use existing subject advisors and school development officers as part of a hands-on quality assurance approach in schools, **this** cannot happen unless these 'inspectors' have free access to all areas in all schools. This needs to be linked to an appraisal system, both for classroom teachers and departmental officials. Teacher organisations would ensure that correct appeal and grievance procedures were in place. Quality Assurance mechanisms cannot be implemented until all departmental officials have free access to all areas of the school,

. The attitude of educators is widely cited as a cause of poor results. A number of incidents of teachers being 'on strike' in the classroom were cited. In this regard, schools that were equally **under-resourced** were said to have achieved dramatically different results in the examination. The conclusion drawn was that the major variable was the attitude of the educator. Issues around appointments made for seemingly political reasons were cited as a major reason for the poor management of many underachieving schools.

• Low and erratic attendance is another cause of poor performance. Based on the information in our discussions with provinces, it appears that learner attendance is very low or erratic at the following times: after the lunch break, when few learners return to school in many schools, making it well-nigh impossible for lessons to continue; on pension payment days, when many children accompany their grandparents to collect their pensions; on pay-day, when the teachers are present for only part of the day; and in some areas on Mondays and Fridays when senior staff members are absent as a consequence of the moratorium on the use of government vehicles on those days. In addition, it seems that many schools routinely begin their school day in a haphazard fashion and seldom at the stated time, that some teachers arrive at class late and leave early, and that registers of attendance (relating to educators as well as learners) are not kept.

- Lack of appropriate standards of assessment prior to Grade 12 add to the difficulties experienced by learners. It is quite clear from the examiners' reports as well as from our discussions with the provinces that many learners sit for their first HG examination in various subjects for the first time in the Senior Certificate examinations. Until this time, they have written papers set on parts of the syllabus (e.g. educators only cover two chapters of the textbook, so they set an examination only on this and learners do not realise that they would have failed an exam which covered the syllabus) and/or on SG when the learners are meant to write on HG. In many schools, Grade 12 students registered for Mathematics HG had still not begun their Geometry syllabus by the middle of August, i.e. some 20 school days before the end of teaching. It is no wonder that learners' Senior Certificate results bear no relation to the results that they have been accustomed to achieving and come as a shock to both learners and educators. It also means, of course, that learners have no experience on which to base their preparation. In this regard, the Committee's recommendation is that the Grade 11 examinations should be moderated internally by the Subject Head or Head of Department, and that proper, full-scale 'trial Matric' examinations be held no later than August in Grade 12, preferably early enough to allow remedial action to be taken where necessary.

. Inadequate preparation on examination techniques is another problem area. In many examiners' reports, mention is made of the fact that learners appear to have no strategies for writing examinations, and thus ignore instructions or spend disproportionate amounts of time on some sections of the papers.

- Learners are generally treated in an arbitrary fashion; for example, they are registered for the wrong subjects, or promoted when they should not have been. They have no reliable way of assessing where they stand or what their chances will be in their final examination.

- Inadequately trained and uncommitted chief examiners add to the general disillusionment and lack of motivation surrounding the examination.

- There is real evidence that learners rely on the oral mode only. There appears to be little written consolidation with feedback. This is confirmed in the examiners' reports.

- In some cases, educators do not know the syllabus, e.g. that there is a practical or oral component. Often educators are not fully competent themselves in the subject; for example, many educators are not competent to teach at HG level, so they teach the whole class at SG level (and frequently in the same classroom).

- Educators do not manage their own time or work properly and in some cases maybe teaching subjects they are not trained for.

Clearly, there is no overnight solution to many of these deeply seated problems. It was generally felt that a number of interventions designed to develop the skills of examiners, moderators, subject advisors and school development officers, would be a good way of addressing some of these problems in addition to the obvious interventions, i.e. a re-examination of the role and qualifications of teachers themselves. These interventions could be focused on new responsibilities for quality assurance that should be part of the new thrust towards the establishment and functions of Learning Site Effectiveness Units. There was, in addition, general agreement that a more detailed and scientific investigation into what goes on in our under-achieving classrooms needs to take place as a matter of urgency.

Another widely held belief was that assessment could be dramatically improved once educators understood and could implement outcomes-based assessment. Many interviewees felt that we should not wait until 2005, but rather concentrate on developing assessment **capacity** through **challenging** educators to develop outcomes-based assessments on existing syllabi. One grouping even suggested an incremental percentage of the syllabus to be assessed in this way annually.

2.1.10 Consolidated Recommendations

• A single, cost-effective Further Education and Training Certificate should be developed to meet the requirements of a school-leaving certificate, a work-readiness certificate and access to higher education certificate. This design would include the categorisation of subjects into fundamental, core and elective, as well as subject packaging to ensure coherence. The process of rationalisation of school and technical college subjects which is currently **underway** in the **Department** of Education should be broadened to include representatives of the Department of **Labour** and **SAQA** and should extend its scope. It should take the form of a small Standing Committee which should include relevant **stakeholders** and have access to research and development expertise as needed over a minimum period of five years to co-ordinate the following activities:

·　　The rationalisation and revision of existing school and technical college subjects.

- The integration of Higher and Standard Grade subjects.

- The research and design, in collaboration with appropriate SETAS, of alternative vocationally oriented subjects/learning areas and qualifications.

·　　The development, in collaboration with selected SETAS and **ETQAs,** of a number of new **sectorally-** oriented qualifications at **NQF** levels 2-4, involving key combinations of subjects and including **learnerships.**

- The development of learning programmed for the above qualifications,

　　The development of valid and reliable assessments for the above qualifications.

　　The generation of transformative standards for the above qualifications at levels 2-4 on the **NQF** in the context of a genuine standard-setting process (which takes time).

　　The piloting of the above-mentioned new qualifications within selected schools and colleges, to begin by the year 2000 at the latest.

·　　The piloting of the above-mentioned new qualifications involving **learnerships in** the context of partnerships between education and industry to begin by the year 2000 at the latest.

　　The initiation of tracer studies to acquire sufficient data to evaluate the success of the programmed and qualifications in terms of access to employment and to HE.

·　　The gradual phasing in of the above new qualifications, with the outdated versions only being discontinued when the replacement subjects/learning areas have been proved successful, relevant and appropriate.

• The Department of Education should set up a Task Team, including representatives from **SAQA,** the Department of **Labour** and the HE sector, to **re-formulate** the requirements for a Senior Certificate, and

to re-examine the requirements for endorsement for university entrance: This team should concern itself with (also see Paragraph 2.3.2 below):

· reaching agreement so that by the year 2002 all Senior Certificates meet the requirements set by SAQA for FETC level 4 qualifications;

· reaching agreement on whether, within this new context, there will be any need for additional requirements for endorsement for university entrance, or whether this should be left to individual institutions and/or faculties;

· monitoring, during the redesign of Senior Certificate/FETC, existing admission tests that promote equity and inclusiveness to prevent them from becoming parallel admission systems to the current Senior Certificate examination;

· reaching agreement upon any other selection criteria or processes which might help to identify candidates for Higher Education who have had poor educational opportunities but achieved comparatively well. In this context the increased and innovative use of existing examination data (for example to show rank order of candidates per examination centre) for use in university admissions procedures should be investigated; and

planning an advocacy campaign aimed at the HE sector to ensure that the interim Senior Certificate qualifications agreed upon are understood and accepted as credible by the key stakeholders.

• The Committee recommends that a definite date be set during 1999 by the Minister of Education for the implementation of the age of 15 as the end of compulsory and free education. This should not take place until a credible GETC examination has been established.

• The Department of Education should ensure that a GETC be designed at a national level and piloted *in* selected representative schools in all provinces, beginning in the year 2000 at the latest.

• A Task Team should be set up during 1998 to make recommendations regarding the standardisation of language assessment at Senior Certificate level. This team should concern itself with:

standardizing the weighings given to different components of the assessment in first language examinations, particularly in relation to the 11 official South African languages;

- setting a time frame for a shift in the emphasis of the examinations towards the communicative and higher cognitive skills embodied in the critical outcomes; and

setting a time frame for the training of panels of language examiners and moderators to implement these new assessment guidelines in practice.

. A national INSET campaign should be launched to begin in 1999 and continue for a period of six years. The programme should target the teaching and learning of the critical outcomes throughout all grades, with special emphasis on the context of language teaching. This will entail:

INSET training on classroom-based management and assessment of OBET, focusing on the critical outcomes;

INSET training targeting the use of existing materials for the teaching of language with an OBET approach, focusing particularly on the critical outcomes; and

the Senior Certificate examinations need to begin (with immediate effect) to incorporate the assessment of the critical outcomes. This will help to focus the attention of educators and learners on their importance, and will 'kick-start' and reinforce the INSET campaigns mentioned above.

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● A national INSET campaign should be launched to begin in 1999, continuing for a period of six years, targeting the management of quality assurance systems and the introduction of reliable and valid internal assessment practices. This should focus on the establishment of competent Learning Site Effectiveness Units at national and provincial levels. This will entail:

- INSET training around quality assurance management systems for assessment at school quality co-ordinator level; each school will have a designated quality co-ordinator who will be responsible for organizing and running moderation and standardisation meetings, convening meetings for the setting and marking of assessments in learning area or year-group teams; the on-going development and implementation of internal whole-school assessment policy; and the internal co-ordination of INSET relating to assessment and quality assurance practices;

· INSET training around quality assurance management systems for departmental officials at middle management level; this will focus on preparing the current school development officers, subject advisors, etc., to perform the main quality management functions within the Learning Site Effectiveness Units in relation to the moderation of internal continuous assessment, including practical, portfolios and orals; and in co-ordinating standardisation meetings at cluster and district level to ensure standards are interpreted consistently;

INSET training around quality assurance management systems for assessment at senior management level; this will prepare participants to monitor and ensure accountability in the LSEUs and take regular action on reports from middle management quality assurance functions, as well as co-ordinating moderation at provincial level and reporting to the Department of Education LSEU and the FETQA on relevant matters.

2.2 The role of SAFCERT

2.2.1 The role of SAFCERT in assuring the quality of the Senior Certificate Examinations

SAFCERT is responsible for the moderation of Senior Certificate examinations across examining bodies, for the maintenance of consistent standards from year to year within each examining body and for the issuing of Senior Certificates. While this task is carried out efficiently by SAFCERT, quality assurance should involve much more than this. In carrying out these functions, SAFCERT makes regulations that must be followed by the examining bodies concerned and it charges these bodies for its services. SAFCERT is governed by a Council, which is appointed by the Minister of Education, who also appoints the Chair of the Council. This Council reports directly to Parliament on an annual basis.

The functions of SAFCERT should gradually be taken over by a new body, the Further Education and Training Quality Assurer (FETQA), established in line with the SAQA Act and regulations already gazetted by the Minister. The FETQA will be responsible for the accreditation of learner achievements in the FET band. It may delegate this function to accredited examining bodies - assessment agencies - but will remain accountable for the consistency, reliability and validity of the credits and qualifications awarded.

The FETQA will also be responsible for the accreditation of providers in the education sector. It may delegate this function to the national Department of Education and provincial Department of Education Learning Site Effectiveness Units, or in the case of private providers to other organisations, but it will remain accountable for the monitoring of these quality assurance systems.

In the interim, SAFCERT should play a stronger role in the training function of examiners and moderators and in quality assurance in general, rather than relying mainly on the adjustment of marks to ensure acceptable standards. This will help to lay the foundation for a smooth transfer of these functions to the FETQA.

2.2.2 Moderation of standards across examining bodies and over time by moderating examination papers

The practice of using the raw scores of the previous five years to construct norms for the next year is a well-established one, but it relies heavily on the assumption that the standards of the examinations (including the examination papers, the memorandums and the marking) were satisfactory during those previous five years, for all the examining bodies. The role of the moderators in ensuring that these assumptions are true cannot be overemphasised. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the moderators must be the best available, that one must be able to *rely* on them to perform their moderating functions well, and that nothing hinders them in performing these duties.

In relation to moderation of standards across examining bodies, the current procedures are very limited and flawed. SAFCERT has a moderation committee that appoints SAFCERT moderators for all subjects. All examining bodies are asked to send at least one examiner and one internal moderator per paper each year to a meeting called by SAFCERT, and run by the SAFCERT moderator. At this meeting the standard of different questions and overall papers is examined and an agreement is reached on how to deal with issues arising from past and current experience. Currently many of the bodies send no one, as they lack funds to cover costs. SAFCERT intends to remedy this situation from 1998 onwards by paying all costs and insisting that attendance is compulsory. Attendance of meetings of moderators and examiners must be made compulsory for the examiners and internal moderators of all examining bodies and a way must be found to cover the costs. A concerted effort must be made to ensure that each of these meetings constitutes a serious opportunity for developing quality assurance competence.

In addition, the question papers and memoranda set by each examining body are sent to the SAFCERT moderators after the papers have been moderated internally. The SAFCERT moderator will then try to:
* improve the paper in general terms (balance, coverage, language, layout, clarity of expression etc); and
* ensure that the standard of papers in the subject in question, is the same for different bodies.

It is generally conceded that it is impossible to achieve exactly the same standard across the various bodies. However, if the process outlined above is followed conscientiously by examining bodies and performed by

competent SAFCERT moderators, it would certainly provide a sound basis for the establishment of consistent national standards. In reality many of the bodies allow their examiners and internal moderators to fall well behind schedule, leaving little or no time to follow the recommendations of the SAFCERT moderators. Occasionally the papers have already been sent to the printers before they are sent for moderation.

In these circumstances, SAFCERT needs to exercise more control, even if this means insisting on seeing papers much earlier in the examination time frame. If a paper was unacceptable and SAFCERT was not convinced that it could be corrected in time, the examining body concerned could be instructed to buy in one of the papers in that subject which had already been moderated and approved. The following year they would be free to set their own paper again.   This would not be a particularly harsh step to take, since examination bodies frequently buy in papers from other bodies in those subjects where few candidates write. It is imperative that candidates be protected from poor and unfair examination papers.

SAFCERT, and later the FETQA, should appoint a panel of moderators for each subject. These posts should be advertised. The date of the meeting of the panel of moderators (or some specified time before that) should be announced in advance as the deadline for the submission of papers by the examining bodies. It is imperative that these moderators be trained in both the practice and procedures of moderation.

SAFCERT seems to exercise little control over the flow of correspondence between the examining bodies and the SAFCERT moderators. All correspondence between the moderators and the examining bodies must be conducted through the SAFCERT office. All papers must be sent directly to SAFCERT. This situation should continue until SAFCERT has been fully integrated into the FETQA.

2.2.3 Moderation of standards across bodies by using common questions/papers

For some time SAFCERT has tried to persuade examining bodies to include a common question in the common part of the papers, which could then be used as the basis for statistical adjustment. This would therefore become the most important part of the examination for standardizing candidates' marks and might result in educators focusing on the kind of question included in the common section. Teaching and learning would therefore be forced in a particular direction. This washback effect has been widely researched and is often summarised with the acronym WYTIWYG (what you test is what you get).

The common questions used in the past by SAFCERT to compare a number of examining bodies took the form of multiple-choice questions that tended to focus on content memorisation. For this reason certain bodies refused to participate, as they felt that their candidates were able to display higher order critical and creative thinking skills, conceptual understanding and application, and so on, which the common questions did not value. Concerns were also expressed about the effect of possible cultural and other biases in these questions.

It is important, therefore, to reach consensus about the design and focus of a common moderating instrument if this is to be introduced. One possibility might involve developing and pre-testing questions to eliminate bias.

A concerted effort must be made to reach consensus about common questions or a common paper on an experimental basis, even if only for a limited number of subjects and a limited number of years, for incorporation into the quality assurance approach of the FETQA.

2.2.4 Maintenance of consistent standards from year to year within each examining body

SAFCERT has also had the responsibility of trying to ensure consistency of standards from year to year within each examining body. This is normally achieved by using the raw scores from the previous five years to calculate a 'desired distribution' to use as a basis for comparison and, where necessary, statistical adjustment. This practice should be carried out sensitively, in consultation with all stakeholders who take into consideration all available information that should be considered. A rather crude mechanistic adjustment to force results to fit a bell-curve is undesirable. This is considered to be an important tool for moderation throughout the world.

The main difficulty with this in the South African context is that it assumes a stable group of candidates over a five-year period. It seems to be agreed that in the absence of this, SAFCERT has approached the problem in a logical way, producing the most accurate 'desired distribution' possible under the circumstances, until recently. However, the actual amalgamation of the former apartheid examination boards into provincial examination boards is widely perceived to have advantaged the formerly white schools and disadvantaged candidates from the previously black schools. In addition, reports of adjustments of up to 9% on many papers in some provincial examination departments (albeit approved by SAFCERT) have undermined public confidence in the results in some quarters.

The poor results of 1996 and 1997 (and possibly 1998) must not be allowed to dominate the norms for the next five years, should the results improve over the next few years. The effect of any improvement in the education situation in general should not be negated by these poor results.

2.2.5 The question of second language as medium of instruction

It is clear that candidates who write their non-language subjects in a language other than their first language, are at, a considerable disadvantage not only in terms of their own performance (i.e. whether they can fully understand the questions and convey their understanding to the examiners effectively) but also because they are being assessed in comparison with other candidates who are writing in their first language.

This is obviously an inequitable situation. In an ideal world, or at least in the long term, one would hope that with greatly improved language teaching, and/or as a consequence of the rapid development of all the country's official languages, these real and comparative disadvantages would disappear.

2.2.6 **Reporting the results** of **repeaters separately**

The number of candidates that repeat the Senior Certificate examination varies from province to province. In some provinces the number of repeaters can be as high as 50000 candidates. There is no doubt that candidates who repeat the examination have a negative influence on the distribution of raw marks (i.e. they lower the pass-rates, and distort the true picture as regards education in the province). In order to determine the extent of the influence of repeaters on **performance** it is necessary that repeaters be identified.

The Committee recommends that Q Data be requested to devise a **programme** that could identify repeaters. The issue of whether the norms should be based on first -time takers of the examination and the inclusion of repeaters needs also to be investigated.

2.2.7 The levying of charges

In view of the large numbers of candidates who register for the examination but who do not actually write it and in view of the large numbers of candidates who write the examination although they are totally unprepared for it, the Committee believes that the issue of an examination fee needs urgent investigation. This is strongly supported by all who were interviewed during the investigation.

2.2.8   **Lines of accountability and reporting for SAFCERT**

SAFCERT reports to parliament annually. Its report is brief and consists mainly of accounts of income and expenditure and statistics relating to the Senior Certificate examination results. There is some concern about the skeletal nature of the reports. It is felt that the **Department** of Education and **IPEC** could benefit from closer interaction with **SAFCERT** throughout the year. For example, **SAFCERT,** integrated as part of the **FETQA,** could play an important role in helping the Department of Education and examining boards to **analyse** the examination results in order to identify and solve problems of delivery, quality management and assessment. In addition, the **SAFCERT** Council, for the interim period of its existence, could benefit from closer consultation with the Department of Education in relation to proposed changes in regulations or procedures which should be taken in the context of education and training policy.

The annual report of the **FETQA** (including **SAFCERT)** should play an educational role in addition to its present role. It should be made available to the examining bodies and could entail some analyses of the results and inferences that may be drawn from these.

SAFCERT should interact more closely with the quality assurance directorate of the Department of Education throughout the year.

2.2.9 The role of examination boards/assessment agencies

Several concerns have been raised about the provincial education departments each running public examinations for their own provinces. One of the concerns raised in many quarters concerns transparency (it is perceived that the player acts as referee). Another concern is about capacity in terms of human resource expertise and numbers. Finally a concern was raised about the duplication of functions for small numbers of candidates, resulting in the waste of scarce national resources.

An immediate way to improve this situation would be for existing examination bodies to form consortia to share expertise and resources. Some provinces are considering making the examination departments independent of the provincial education department in response to the first concern raised above. (If this goes ahead, however, there is a danger that it will become very difficult for the examination to play a formative educational role through the close involvement of the curriculum section in the examination process, as is proposed elsewhere in this Report.) In the long run it is possible to envisage a system where there are four or five examining bodies/assessment agencies catering for GETC and FETC qualifications for schools, technical colleges and FE colleges nationally.

The Department of Education, in consultation with the existing examining bodies, should investigate the possibility of groups of provinces pooling their resources to run the Senior Certificate examinations.

2.2.10 Consolidated recommendations

. The national Department of Education (Department of Education) should draw up a plan for the establishment of an ETQA for the Further Education and Training band (FETQA) in line with the SAQA Act and regulations already gazetted by the Minister. This body has been posited in the FET Green and White Papers and the FET Act. The Department of Education should submit this plan to SAQA for approval as a matter of urgency, certainly before the end of 1998, and set up a governing body that meets the criteria for an ETQA to oversee the establishment of the new FETQA.

. The newly appointed SAFCERT Council should be instructed by the Minister to work closely with the governing body of the new FETQA to improve current quality assurance systems and establish new ones, with the understanding that SAFCERT will, during the next five years, be absorbed into the new FETQA. The new FETQA governing body should include some of the stakeholders already represented on the SAFCERT Council.

. The SAFCERT Council should take immediate action on the following recommendations:
   ➢ A high level post should be created to oversee the appointment and training of SAFCERT moderators, to monitor the process of moderation of the examination papers, to monitor and co-

ordinate input from marking into the process of statistical adjustment and to ensure that quality feedback is given to educators throughout the country.

➢ A second person should be appointed to work with the current CEO of SAFCERT to ensure that the adjustment of raw scores continues in an educationally sound, sensitive and flexible manner after the current incumbents retirement.

➢ Attendance of the meetings of moderators and examiners must be made compulsory for the examiners and internal moderators of all examining bodies and a way must be found to cover the costs. A concerted effort must be made to ensure that each of these meetings constitutes a serious opportunity for training and development.

➢ A panel of moderators should be appointed for each subject. These posts should be advertised. The date of the meeting of the panel of moderators (or some specified time before that) should be announced in advance as the deadline for the submission of papers by the examining bodies, in order to ensure that papers can be compared. All correspondence between the moderators and the internal examiners and moderators of the examining bodies must be conducted through the SAFCERT office. All papers must be sent directly to SAFCERT.

➢ A concerted effort must be made to reach consensus about common questions or a common paper on an experimental basis, even if only for a limited number of subjects or one subject. One possibility is an additional cross-curricular paper based on the critical outcomes. This should initially be introduced for a limited number of years. This could help to establish consistency of standards across different examining bodies/assessment agencies.

➢ The SAFCERT annual report should play an educational role in addition to its present role. It should be made available to the examining bodies and could entail some analyses of the results and inferences that may be drawn from these. In addition, SAFCERT should interact more closely with the Department of Education throughout the year.

➢ The new FETQA will gradually incorporate the SAFCERT functions as well as expanded quality assurance moderation functions which it should develop in consultation with the Department of Education: Quality Assurance Directorate. This will provide a basis for the accreditation of providers offering credits and qualifications in the FET band, using the resources and expertise of the proposed nationally based and provincially-based Learning Site Effectiveness Units (LSEUs). It will also provide part of the basis for the accreditation of learner achievements, including those assessed internally, or assessed in part internally. This FETQA will cover only those providers (private and state) delivering qualifications which fall outside the sphere of SETAS.

➢ An additional Quality Assurance body should be established as the co-ordinating and moderating agency for all the ETQAs (including SETAS and professional bodies) deemed to fall within the world of work. This body will facilitate contact and co-ordination between providers and ETQAs and moderate quality management across the ETQAs.

➢ Providers who are accredited by this workplace Quality Assurance body need not register with the Registrar of private further education providers as contemplated in the FET Act. Such registration will apply to all providers falling under the jurisdiction of the FETQA.

➢ The question of the examination fee to be charged overall needs investigation.